

To: Honorable Members of the Education Committee

From: Virginia Tagliatela, Principal ACES Village School

Date: March 14, 2023

Re: In Support of Senate Bill 1201

This year, ACES Village School currently provides services to 152 students and families who represent over 31 sending school districts in the state of Connecticut. School districts and families seek out placement in our program for a variety of students who require a highly collaborative and structured program to support their students that present with significant behavioral, mental health, physical, medical and/or developmental needs. The students placed with us require these supports in order to meet the FAPE standard under IDEA. The majority of our students receive services under IEP classifications such as Autism, Intellectual Disability, and Multiple Disabilities. I am writing to you today to share why you should support the Bassett Road project in Senate Bill 1201.

Due to our current space limitations, we have been limited in our ability to increase the quality of programming for our students as well as increase availability for student enrollment for our districts. The project at Bassett Road will help to support district and families throughout the state of Connecticut.

As an educational institution we are always reviewing programming to ensure we are meeting the needs of students in a manner that is consistent with current research in best practices as well as any updates to educational law and CSDE guidance. Our students require an increased level of services and supports in community involvement, pre-vocational services, and activities of daily living. They also require more space for the use of strategies such as mindfulness, sensory integration, music therapy, art therapy, and much more. We are limited with the space to provide these services within the current building structure.

School districts are facing challenges with the ability to safely and appropriately serve our student population within the general education environment. They are also facing challenges in finding placements for students that require these higher-level services as part of their educational program. Since my start as Principal in August 2016, we have had to turn away districts each year seeking placement for our programming due to reaching capacity within our

building. Currently, our wait list for placement is at an all-time high of thirteen students with no prospect for space for placement at this point.

The Bassett Road Project proposed in Senate Bill 1201 will impact the entire state of Connecticut by helping to solve both of these issues. With the larger renovated space, we will be able to increase seat availability to districts which will help to solve a necessary problem across our state for appropriate access to FAPE for students who have these support needs. Along with this, our students will receive increased programming in a high-quality format that parents and districts have come to expect with ACES Village School. The additional planned spaces will provide more access and opportunities for pre-vocational work, community instruction, activities of daily living and more. This will ultimately lead to a more productive and supportive transition into adulthood for our students and their families.

Please let me know if there is any additional information that you would like as you consider supporting Senate Bill 1201. This is one project that will truly have a far reach of impact across the state.

Educationally Yours,

Virginia Tagliatela

Virginia Tagliatela
Principal
ACES Village School